



Natural Resources Conservation Service
P.O. Box 2890
Washington, D.C. 20013

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

COLORADO BULLETIN NO.: CO-300-06-07

Date: July 25, 2006

SUBJECT: LTP – Annual Easement/Agreement Monitoring Reports

TO: To All Offices

PURPOSE: To provide guidance on annual monitoring requirements for Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), Grassland Reserve Program (GRP), Wetland Reserve Program (WRP), and Emergency Watershed Protection-Floodplain Easement Program (EWP-FP)

EXPIRATION DATE: September 30, 2006

File Code: 300-8

ACTION REQUIRED BY: September 30, 2006

This is a reminder that all conservation easements in which the United States has an interest, as well as WRP and GRP agreements, require annual monitoring. **Monitoring shall be completed by September 30** each year and reports submitted according to the guidance herein. The nature of the monitoring varies with the program, as summarized below.

Farm and Ranch Lands Protection Program (FRPP), formerly Farmland Protection Program (FPP):

Monitoring is required to ensure the conservation plan is being implemented and maintained. The easement holder has responsibility for more comprehensive easement monitoring and provides an annual report to the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). We will provide those reports to appropriate Field offices as they become available. The conservation plan must have been developed according to the standards and specifications of the NRCS Field Office Technical Guide and approved by the local conservation District.

We have dual conservation planning standards for FRPP in Colorado and dual monitoring standards:

1. **Conservation plans developed to address Highly Erodible Land/Wetland Conservation (HEL/WC) provisions**—required, where applicable, for projects funded in 2002 and later (FRPP). Monitoring, per the current FRPP Manual, will be “in accordance with HEL/WC status review requirements.”

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2. Alternate conservation planning standards:

- A. Since 2002 (FRPP), Colorado has required that, where HEL/WC provisions do not apply, conservation plans shall be developed to address the following, at a minimum:
- On croplands: the Quality Criteria for Soil and Water shall be met.
 - On grazing lands: the Quality Criteria for Soil and Plants shall be met.
- B. Prior to 2002 (FPP), the planning standard was not defined. We generally pursued Resource Management System (RMS) level plans; but if the landowner was not ready or agreeable to do this, we accepted a “progressive plan” that would assure us of protection of the soil resource and “substantial protection of other resources.”

Monitoring for 2.A) and 2.B) shall be performed in accordance with the Colorado Quality Assurance Plan; however, a site visit will be required at least every three years. It is recommended that these visits be coordinated with the easement holder’s annual monitoring visit to promote good communication and relationships among all parties and to ensure effective easement stewardship.

Submit all FRPP/FPP conservation plan monitoring reports to Gary Finstad, Easements Coordinator. (See **Attachment A** for easement locations.)

Grasslands Reserve Program (GRP):

All easements and agreements will be inspected annually for violations either through an onsite visit or by using “remote sensing.” *An onsite inspection is required at least once every three years*, unless a violation is discovered from another method—e.g., review of slides, satellite or aerial imagery, photographs, etc. We do not have national guidance on GRP monitoring, so please use the checklists attached, as appropriate: **Attachment B** (for easements) or **Attachment C** (for Agreements). For a list of GRP easements and agreements, refer to **Attachment D.** Submit monitoring reports to Gary Finstad, Easements Coordinator.

Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP):

Policy for monitoring WRP easements and restoration agreements is found in the WRP manual, CPM Part 514.47 d-g.

All easements/restoration agreements shall receive an annual onsite inspection until the restoration plan is fully implemented. After the plan is implemented, easement and agreement sites shall be inspected annually for violations either through an onsite visit or by using “remote sensing.” *An onsite inspection is required at least once every three years*, unless a violation is discovered from another method—e.g., review of slides, satellite or aerial imagery, photographs, etc. On easements, the first monitoring report is not needed until the year *following* closing of the easement.

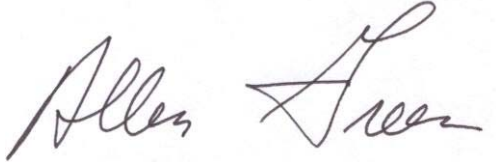
All WRP easement monitoring reports are to be entered in the “Web Toolkit--Environmental Easements” located on the “Field Tools” page of “my.NRCS.” Contact Donna Rasmussen, Programs Analyst, if you need assistance in using this tool. Submit monitoring reports for WRP restoration agreements to Donna.

Emergency Watershed Protection-Floodplain Easement Program (EWP-FP):

Use the WRP monitoring policy as guidance for monitoring EWP-FP easement properties.

Monitoring reports need to be loaded in the "Web Toolkit--Environmental Easements" just as for WRP properties.

Please contact Gary Finstad or Donna Rasmussen at 720-544-2810, if you have any questions.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Allen Green". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Allen" and last name "Green" clearly distinguishable.

ALLEN GREEN
State Conservationist

Attachments

cc w/o encl: All Colorado ACs
All Colorado ARC-Ps
Gary Finstad, Easements Coord., NRCS, Lakewood, CO
Donna Rasmussen, Prog. Anal., NRCS, Lakewood, CO